

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 00578 141813Z
ACTION AID-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6003
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JOINT STATE/AID MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP, RW
SUBJECT: PATHFINDER PROGRAM IN RWANDA

1. IN COURSE OF APRIL 2-7 VISIT, DR. MARASHA, PATHFINDER
FUND'S REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR SUB-SAHARA AFRICA,
DISCUSSED STATUS OF PATHFINDER'S PROGRAM IN RWANDA WITH STATE/AID
OFFICERS. MARASHA ADVISED THAT HE WAS MEETING WITH
MADAME HABIMANA, SECRETARY GENERAL, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
AFFAIRS AND COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE
SCIENTIFIC CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHIC
PROBLEMS ON A REGULAR BASIS DURING THE WEEK. MARASHA
ADVISED THAT:

-- THE FIVE RWANDAN PARTICIPANTS WHO HAD RECENTLY
RETURNED FROM THE PATHFINDER-ORGANIZED (AND USAID-
FINANCED) TOUR OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS IN OTHER
AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED
WITH WHAT THEY SAW.

-- MADAME HABIMANA DISCUSSED PLANS TO ESTABLISH A "BUREAU FOR
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FAMILY PLANNING" TO DIRECT/COORDINATE FAMILY PLANNING
ACTIVITIES IN RWANDA. IF APPROVED, THIS BUREAU WOULD BE
PLACED IN THE PRESIDENCY IN ORDER TO HAVE THE MOST FREEDOM
OF ACTION ACROSS MINISTERIAL LINES.

-- PATHFINDER AND GOR INTEND TO CO-SPONSOR A ONE-WEEK SEMINAR ON
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING IN

JULY-AUGUST. SEMINAR WILL HAVE APPROXIMATELY 75 PARTICIPANTS FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES -- INCLUDING A ZAMBIAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP WHO STRONGLY OPPOSES NATURAL BIRTH CONTROL METHODS (I.E., BILLINGS METHOD) IN FAVOR OF THE PILL AND IUD'S. PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA WILL BE INVITED TO ADDRESS THE SEMINAR.

-- PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA HAS AGREED TO MEET WITH MARASHA IN THE COURSE OF HIS NEXT VISIT TO RWANDA.

2. ALTHOUGH HABIMANA DID NOT DISCUSS BIRTH CONTROL METHODS, MARASHA BELIEVED THAT THE GOR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAMILY PLANNING WAS EVOLVING FAR FASTER THAN HE IMAGINED POSSIBLE AT THE TIME OF HIS FIRST VISIT HERE ONE YEAR AND A HALF AGO. MARASHA EXPECTS THAT THE PROPOSED PATHFINDER-FINANCED MCH CENTERS IN KIGALI, RUHENERI, AND BUTARE WILL MOVE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE IN A MATTER OF MONTHS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WILL BE TREADING CAUTIOUSLY IN ORDER NOT TO JEOPARDIZE THIS PROGRESS.

3. ACCORDING TO MARASHA, HABIMANA IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GOR ACTOR (BELOW PRESIDENT) IN FAMILY PLANNING MATTERS WHERE SHE HAS DIRECT ACCESS TO HABYARIMANA. MARASHA NOTED THAT THOMAS HABANABAKIZE, NEW MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND COOP MOVEMENT, IS A DISTINCT IMPROVEMENT OVER PREDECESSOR. HABANABAKIZE COMES ACROSS AS MUCH MORE AWARE OF RWANDA'S DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS AND PRO-FAMILY PLANNING.

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4. NEXT STEP: WE WILL SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE PATHFINDER IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE AS ITS PROGRAM UNFOLDS. AT SAME TIME AID PLANS LATER THIS MONTH OR EARLY MAY TO FIELD A TEAM TO LOOK CAREFULLY AND SENSITIVELY INTO POST-PATHFINDER RURAL HEALTH/MCH/FP PROJECT POSSIBILITIES. EVEN A MONTH AGO WE WEREN'T CERTAIN THIS WAS FEASIBLE, BUT EVENTS AND ITEMS CONTAINED PARAS ONE-THREE LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT IT CAN NOW BE DONE.

LESSER

NOTE BY OC/T: TELEGRAM DELAY IN TRANSMISSION.

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